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**Hobson, Jonathan ORCID: 0000-0001-8081-6699, Roberts, Hazel ORCID: 0000-0001-5950-077X and Lynch, Kenneth ORCID: 0000-0002-5296-2864 (2018) Community Ownership of local Assets: conditions for sustainable success. In: British Sociological Association Conference 2018: Identity, Community and Social Solidarity, 10/04/2018 - 12/04/2018, Newcastle.**

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# Community Ownership of Local Assists:

*conditions for sustainable success*

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Presented at the British Sociological Association Conference 12.4.2018



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*With*

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# Overview

1. Context
2. Study and data
3. Findings: Legitimacy and Community Capacity
4. Considerations for Sustainability

# Part 1

## Context

*'[as] public sector bodies at local and national levels respond to current financial challenges, reviewing and rationalising their capital portfolios, the disposal of public assets has become a critical component of change in this field.'*

Aiken et al (2011: 14)

# Why is this important?

**Kiernan and Porter  
(2014: 847)**

[a] *'glaring disconnect between the rhetoric of empowered, inclusive communities and the burgeoning reality of cuts to publicly funded community provision'*

**Scott (2015: 130)**

*'The politics associated with localism contain 'deep ambiguities' between ideas of empowerment on the one hand and on the other the responsabilisation of local communities for situations beyond their control'*

**Macleod and  
Emejulu (2014: 431)**

[Communities strengthening public resources by using] *'local knowledge, assets, and energy to rebuild local services on their own terms and in ways that meet their interests and needs'*

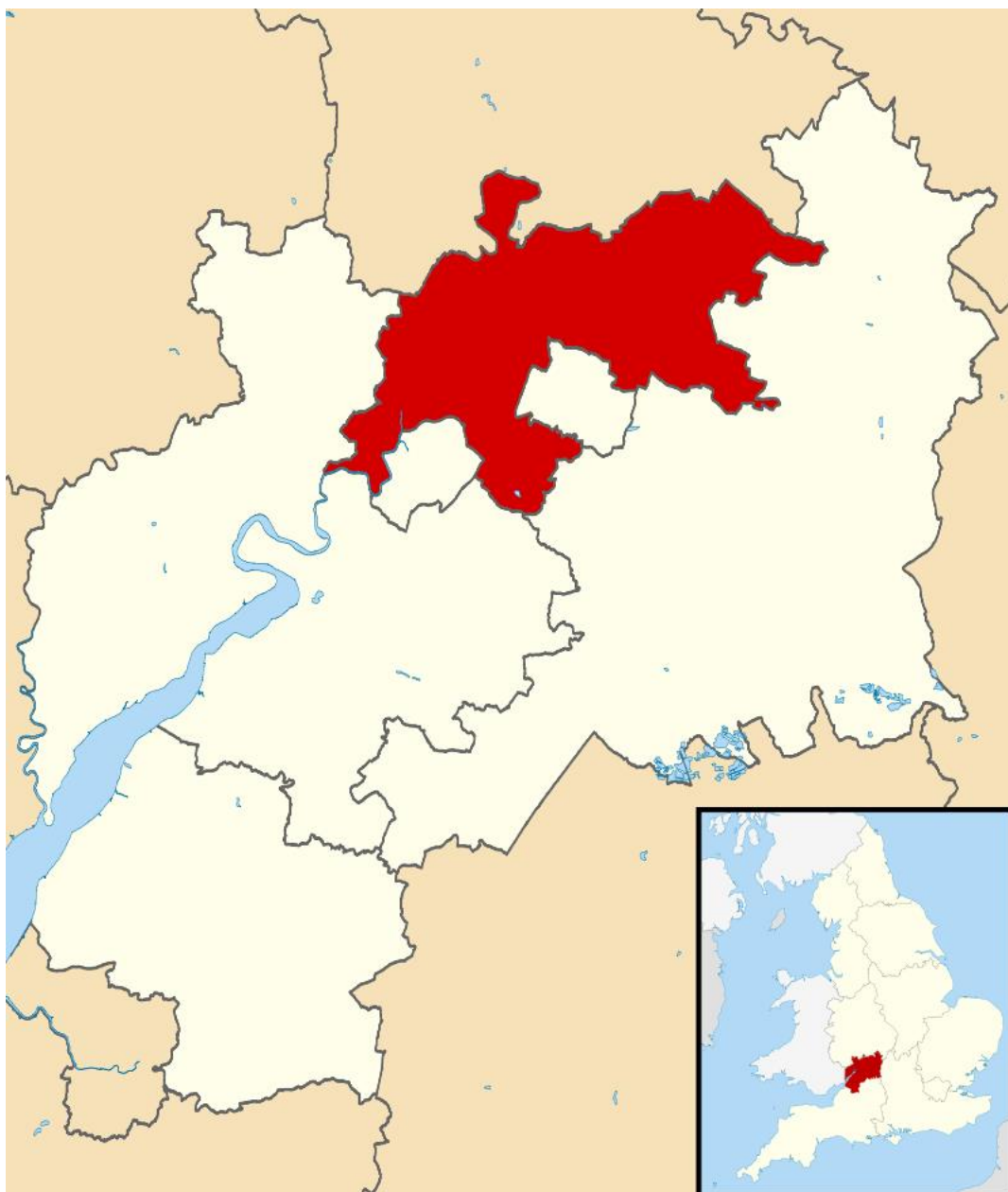
## Part 2

### Study and data

Work undertaken January 2015 - March 2016

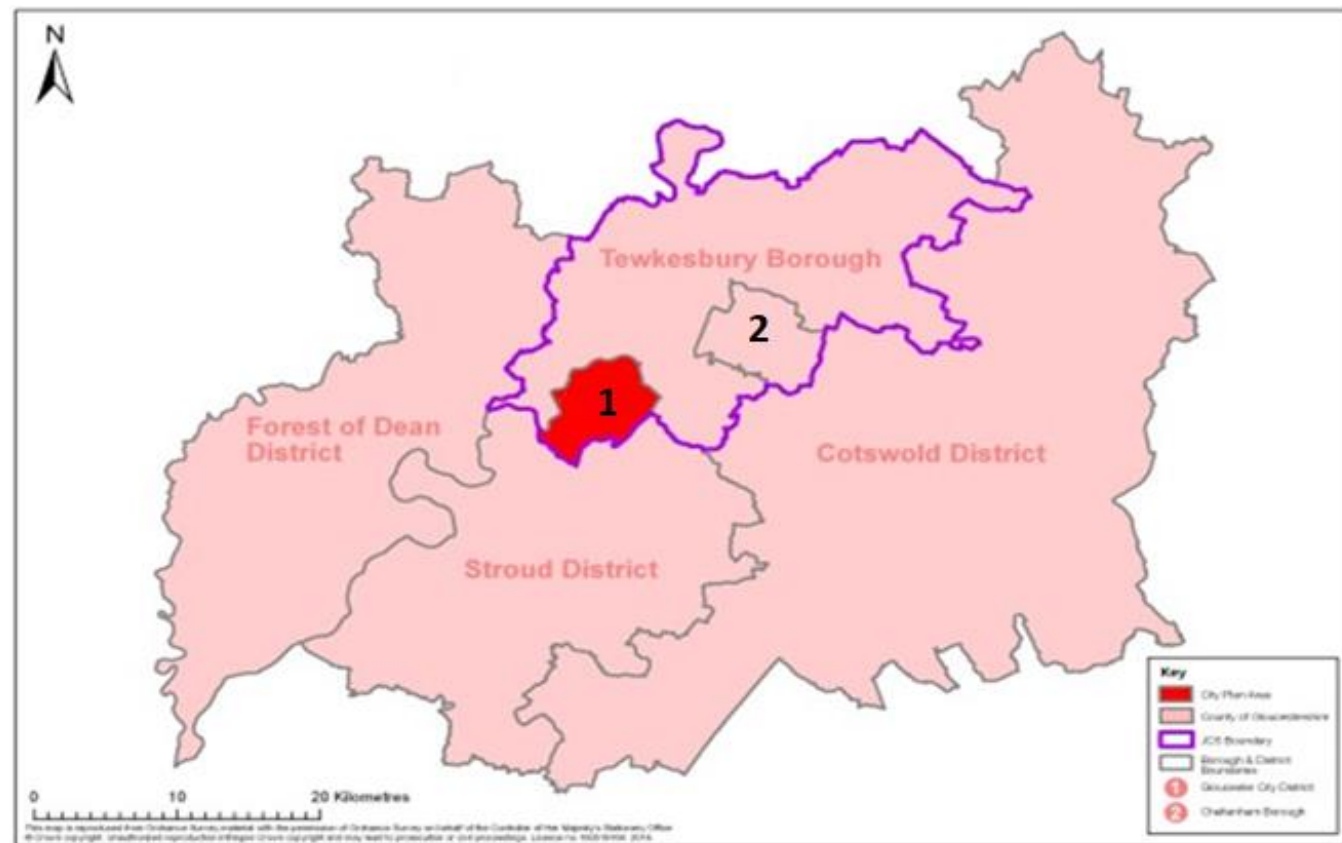
Conducted in part with the Community and Economic Development team at Tewkesbury Borough Council, Gloucestershire.

Exploring what creates **sustainability** in transferred community assets, and avoiding **community dispossession** (cf Mackenzie 2012; Harvey, 2003)



# Tewkesbury Borough

- Population 85,800 (2014)
- Mix of deprived and affluent areas (has top 20 UK for each)
- Semi-rural, abuts two urban areas: Gloucester (1) ; Cheltenham (2)





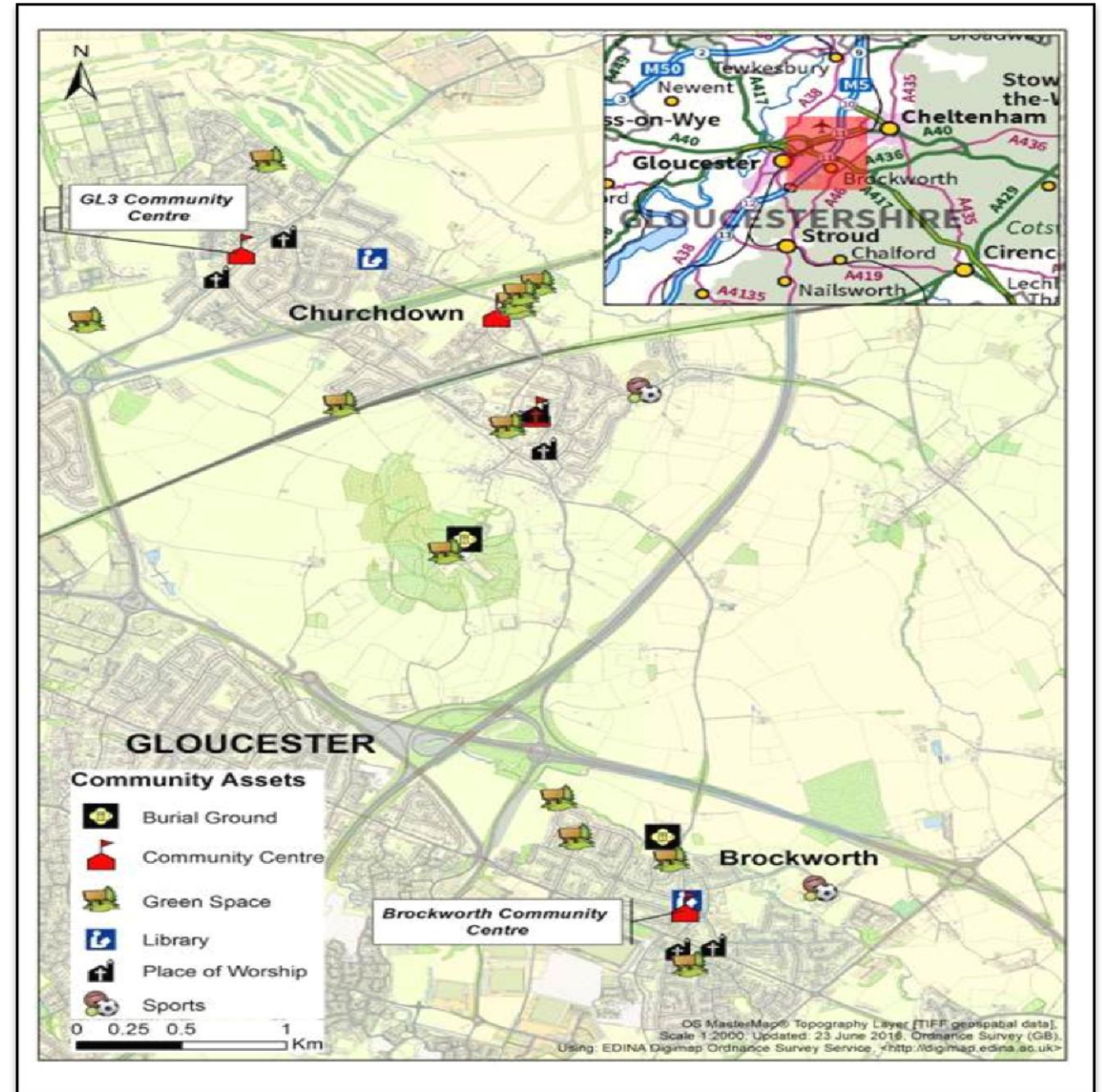
# Case study Locations

## GL3, Churchdown

- *Run by Churchdown Neighbourhood Project as a Community Hub*
- *Activities including youth work, day services for elderly people, sport clubs and exercise in the renovated sports hall, IT facilities and training, cafe.*

## Brockworth Community Centre

- *Transferred to Brockworth Parish Council in 2006 and run by Brockworth Community Project (BCP)*
- *Provides a Community Library and youth work services out of a nearby youth centre.*





# Our Data...

## Brockworth

### Observations and 3 interviewees

- A service manager
- Senior member of Community Project
- Parish Council key stakeholder

## Churchdown

### Observations and 3 interviewees

- Senior member of organisation
- Senior member of organisation
- Parish Council key stakeholder

## Tewkesbury Borough Council

- Borough Council Community Development Officer
- RA placement with Community and Economic Development team
- Minutes for Council meetings for asset transfer

## Part 3

Findings:  
Legitimacy and  
community  
capacity

I) Perceptions of **legitimacy** in  
transferred assets

II) Availability of **community  
capacities** for maintaining assets

# Findings theme 1: Legitimacy

## Assets as open to all...

A legitimate community asset should be '**something whole community can use and feel welcome using**' (Brockworth)

## ...and more responsive

All interviewees felt that the projects were more responsive to local community needs and offered many more activities to a wider range of groups

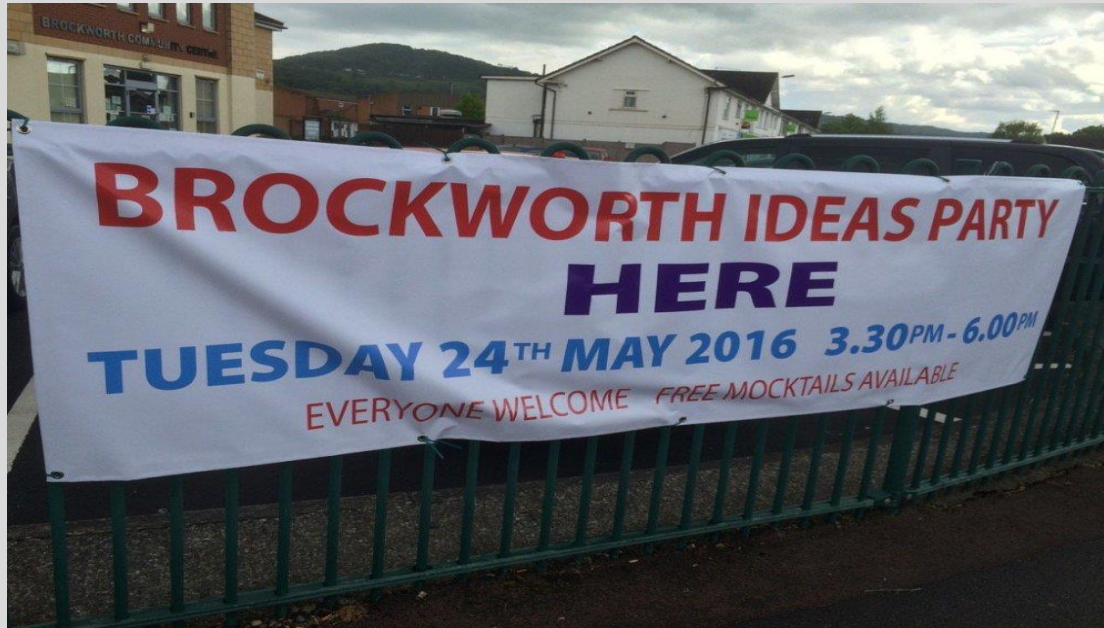
## Business Vs community

Has neoliberalism 'won' or do community-run assets pose an alternative (e.g. Mackenzie, 2012)?

## Political Legitimacy

Has the county council had been 'let off the hook' or was opposition political with a small 'p' - more about personality than party politics.

## Findings theme 2: Community capacity



Brockworth more reliant on volunteers, especially in the library

Large-scale community volunteer offer occurred in response to threat of loss of service



Churchdown's library still council-funded.

As a charity the Community Hub needs to be more commercial in order to keep the building running.

# The capitals (after Carney's 2001 sustainable livelihoods approach)



## Human Capital

skills, knowledge, ability to work, and good health (Carney, 1999)



## Physical Capital

provides a location for the performance of other types of capital



## Social Capital

connections between people - Bonding, bridging and linking social capital (Woolcock, 2001)



## Financial Capital

sufficient economic resources to maintain buildings, pay for activities, employ and train volunteers and paid staff

# Part 4

## Considerations for sustainability?

### Legitimacy?

- Who does the asset serve in the community?
- How do these groups generate the initial and continuing support?
- What happens with change?

### Community capacity?

- Are 'the capitals' there?
- If not, how are they encouraged / achieved?
- What happens with change?



## Responsibilisation or Collective responsibility (Scott, 2015)?

*‘The strange benefit of funding cuts is the ones that have survived will probably be around for a long time...One of the things it's broken is that reliance on the public sector...Yes a harsh lesson, a more collective approach to doing with communities rather than doing to’*

*(Community Development Officer).*

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